

Senator Harp and Representative Geragosian, Co-Chairs:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and the Committee members about the National Theater of the Deaf (NTD). I am Dr. Harvey Corson, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Theater of the Deaf.

We understand that the State of Connecticut is facing a budget crisis in this present state of economy. The State sees a need to reduce the level of expenditures as reflected in the Governor's Deficit Mitigation Plan for FY 2011.

We need to consider the following points:

1. Connecticut was and still is the site of the world's first deaf professional theater company established in 1967 and the oldest continuously performing professional touring theater company in the nation. This company is the NTD composed of deaf and hearing actors, directors, and playwrights from its inception to the present.
2. The NTD is now in its 42nd year of operation and has a commendable history of providing performances in its beautiful and unique theatrical style which links the visually expressive American Sign Language with the spoken word that enables both the deaf and hearing audiences to **see and hear every word**. Although over the years the company has performed in all 50 states and toured to over 30 countries, the NTD and its Little Theater of the Deaf (LTD) have continued to perform in many cities, towns and schools in Connecticut.
3. In recent years, the NTD has collaborated with several theaters in Connecticut on appropriate, creative, and artistic approaches and adaptations to make their productions accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing citizens. The NTD has several potential and exciting collaborations with local, national, and international theatre companies in the works. Also, the NTD has made casting recommendations to those mainstream theaters asking for assistance.
4. The proposed draconic budget reduction of 35% of the line-item grants, including the NTD, in the State Budget for the Commission on Culture and Tourism would seriously curtail the continued operation of the NTD, endangering its survival.

It is for these reasons that the NTD Board as well as the Deaf Community ask you to consider other possible alternative solutions to deal with this budget crisis in order to enable this small theater company to survive as part of the vital and needed cultural diversity in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.